HARALD HAARMANN, *Das Rätsel der Donauzivilisation – Die Entdeckung der ältesten Hochkultur Europas*, Verlag C. H. Beck, München, 2011, 286 p., 100 fig.

A scholarly book of high rank – that is the general impression one remains with after reading Haarmann 2011. The title and subtitle of the book can be translated as *The Enigma of the Danube Civilization – The Discovery of the Oldest High-Culture of Europe.* Terminologically, the interesting thing is that, already in his title+subtitle, the author refers to two basic notions that have been dear to the French (*civilisation*) and to the Germans (*Kultur*), respectively. In the case of the unifying hyphen I used in *high-culture*, I took into account that the German compound *Hochkultur* stands for a basic notion, the meaning and use of which Haarmann explains and justifies at various points of his volume.

Although in his brief introduction Haarmann starts by referring to „the puzzle of a 7000-year-old civilization" (p. 9), throughout the book he manages to make quite many pieces of that puzzle fall in place, one by one, until they come to appear to us as parts of a coherent whole. The author's basic intention, already visible in the statements he makes in the opening pages, is to show that the Neolithic-Chalcolithic prehistory of the part of the world which an outstanding predecessor, Marija Gimbutas, regarded as "Old Europe" was far from being backward. Haarmann turns to good account not only the basic views of Gimbutas (d. 1994), but also much more recent discoveries and propositions which renowned specialists have published, in various countries.

In Haarmann 2011, the author's own statements and conclusions as well as the ones he selected from works of other authors – of various fields – reveal some Old European aspects that may appear as surprising "records" (*Rekorde*). In that respect, it was not in Anatolia, Mesopotamia or Egypt but in Old Europe where things such as the following ones were discovered (see pages 11–12):

– the oldest "megasettlements" in the world;

– the oldest continuously inhabited localities of Europe (Larissa and Varna);

– large one-family houses;

– rows of double-storeyed houses;

– the earliest traces of the potter's wheel and kiln, of metal work (the gold objects of Varna dating from ca. 4500 BC) and of wine and olive-oil production;

– last but not least, Old Europeans made use not only of signs that represented a numerical system, but also of signs that can be considered as representing the *earliest script* in the world.

The first chapter of the book is dedicated to the "transition to the Neolithic in Europe", which Haarmann dates to ca. 7500–5500 BC. The first issue tackled by the author is whether passage from hunting-and-gathering to the "agrarian package" (that is, basically, domestication and cultivation) can actually be regarded as a "revolution," taking into account that the process must have taken about 2500 years (p. 13). For another issue, Haarmann is in favor of the idea that sedentary life could be possible even before the transition to agriculture (as indicated by finds such as the ones from Can Hasan, in western Anatolia, and from Lepenski Vir, on the Serbian bank of the Danube, in the area of the Iron Gates).

The author joins the specialists who consider that – "undeniably" (p. 14) – there was a close Anatolian-European relationship in regard to the earliest forms of plant-cultivation and stockbreeding. He is also in favor of Ryan and Pitman's theory (1998), according to which the Bosphorus strait that now separates Anatolia from the Balkans appeared, by a geological cataclysm, as late as the 7th millennium BC. Haarmann assumes that ca. 7500–6700 BC there had been contact and circulation over the still intact isthmus between Europe and Asia Minor (p. 15). Some of the questions he raises in regard to "phase I" (of agrarian life) refer to acceptable and not so acceptable mainstream views: (1) wherefrom and how agriculture came to Europe; (2) whether the agrarian technology was brought by immigrants, or just by "transfer of ideas"; (3) by what means people, implements and animals could be transported across the Aegean Sea.

That sea navigation did exist even before 7000 BC is proved, for instance, by the fact that around that time primitive agriculture was introduced onto Crete; and the kind of wheat that began to be cultivated there, namely *Triticum aestivum*, obviously originated in Anatolia (p. 17). As for domestic animals, Haarmann joins the opinions according to which immigrants brought to Crete only the "idea" of domestication, and they applied it to local wild species (including aurochs and sheep – p. 18). Haarmann is definitely against visions of "mass migrations" of early farmers across the Aegean Sea, not to speak of transportation of domestic animals, by boat or raft (p. 9). If the earliest bone fragments from cattle and sheep discovered in Greece (see map on p. 23) indicate Anatolian origins, then – according to the same author – those animals must have descended from the ones originally brought from Anatolia before the Flood, that is, before the catastrophe that destroyed the above-mentioned isthmus. All of a sudden, circulation by land between Anatolia and Southeast Europe (or, rather, both ways) was no longer possible and, ca. 6700 BC, there began a phase during which the original myth of the Flood took shape and spread to other areas (see "phase 2" on pages 25–31).

The quite important "phase 3" (of the sixth millennium BC) is presented by Haarmann as "the formative period of Old Europe," a period marked by the effects of the Flood as well as by the "mini-Ice Age" of ca. 6200–5800 BC, and then by the rapid warming up that started about 5800 BC (p. 32). It was especially during the final part of that phase that the early farmers of Greece (and especially of

Thessaly) began their expansion towards the Danube, along the natural corridors represented by the valleys of the Vardar and the Morava (see map on p. 35). Haarmann is in favor of the idea that the contacts between the expanding Neolithic farmers and the local "Mesolithics" were "dominantly peaceful" (p. 34), which would account for the fact that the spreading of the agrarian know-how could be done by colonization proper as well as by "transfer of ideas."

Haarmann appears to agree with recent specialists (mainly Budja) in regard to the dominance of a Mediterranean gene pool that such specialists consider as contribution of the native (pre-Neolithic) demic basis, rather than of the Neolithic immigrants from the south. In that respect, however, one cannot overlook the more complex arguments – anthropological rather than genetic – to be found in Gimbutas 1991 (*The Civilization of the Goddess*, pages 25–26), where the following aspects are pointed out: "food production technology was carried northward to the Danube basin by migrating populations from Macedonia"; the physical type of the Early-Neolithic population of most Starčevo-Criş sites in regions such as central Serbia and southeastern Hungary "has been shown to be the gracile Mediterranean," although there also are signs of "a mixture of dolichocranial Mediterranean with local Cro-Magnon" – the latter aspect indicating "intermixing of the immigrants with the local Mesolithic populations." As for possible domestication of local species of animals, it is also Gimbutas (loc.cit.) who observes that "sheep and goats continued to be the predominant domesticated animals," and that, in regard to cattle, "proof of experimental cattle breeding" comes from sites "where a transitional form, between the local wild *Bos primigenius* and the imported domesticated *Bos taurus*, has been identified."

For all divergent views that have been expressed on its factors, "phase 3" obviously led to the formation and the flourishing of a series of "regional cultures" in the Carpathian-Danubian area along the Middle and Lower Danube. In a special subchapter, Haarmann presents the five most important *Kulturprovinzen*: (1) Vinča, (2) Karanovo, (3) Cucuteni, (4) Trypillya (Tripolje), (5) Tisza and Lengyel.

Chapter 2 focuses on the "traces of Old Europeans", beginning with genetic data. In his interpretation of what Cavalli-Sforza 1996 presented of "the Mediterranean genotype" (see map on p. 54), Haarmann rightly objects to the opinion of Cavalli-Sforza and his team, according to which the quite concentrated manifestation of the genotype under discussion on both shores of the Aegean Sea and in Southern Italy reflects the spreading of ancient Greeks. As Haarmann observes (p. 55), there is manifest density of Mediterranean traits also in areas where a Greek genetic impact was hardly possible (Croatia, Serbia, Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova and Ukraine); therefore, according to the same author, we should consider that a population representing the Mediterranean genotype was already present in Southeast Europe even in Mesolithic times, that is, before the spreading of early farmers. One remark at this point would be that, indeed, traces of a certain Palaeo-Mediterranid type are manifest in the Old European area under discussion (including the turning-table region of the Danubian Iron Gates). Such traces in southwestern Romania are considered (by Romanian archaeologists) to represent the pre-Neolithic population of a Remedello-Azilian type. However, it would be hard to decide whether the (rather sparse) autochthonous Mesolithic population could impose their own genetic pool by outnumbering the gracile Mediterranids that migrated from the south (and they did it not only because of favorable climatic changes, but also because agriculture usually implies population boom).

Extremely interesting (not only in chapter 2, but also in the whole book are Haarmann linguistic arguments that sustain the idea of a quite significant pre-Indo-European lexical stock, part of which may come even from the pre-Neolithic population of Southeast Europe. In regard to Greek, Haarmann gives whole lists of substratal (most probably pre-Indo-European) words, some of which have actually become international in recent times. The Greek words under discussion (pages 63–75) represent fields such as "plants and animals," "natural phenomena and landscape," and, more significantly, "the agrarian package" (*aroma* 'aromatic plant', *daphne* 'laurel', *elaia* 'olive', *kaktos* 'cactus', *kastanon* 'chestnut', *kerasos* 'cherry-tree', *kuparissos* 'cypress', *melon* 'apple', *oinos* 'wine', *petro-selinon* 'parsley', *thunnos* 'tuna', etc.). To these Haarmann adds "structural elements," such as the much discussed suffixes *-nth-, -nd-, -ss-, -mn-,* etc., which occur not only in common words, but also in proper names (see the two parallel columns – "European side" and "Asian side" – on p. 76).

In chapter 3 Haarmann discusses economic and environmental-social aspects, beginning with circulation of goods (obsidian, spondylus shells, salt, copper, gold, etc.) and continuing with ritual exchange of gifts, navigation (as reflected in Old European representations of boats), settlements and architecture, shrines and graves. The author points out that certain patterns of Old European social behavior may have been perpetuated through millennia up until medieval times (for instance, in the case of "the tradition of Sunday church-going in connection with a weekly market" – p. 88). Also, he gives numerous examples of probable Old European terms which had the chance to be perpetuated via Greek (for instance, *spondulos*, as name of the kind shell that most probably had ritual functions too; or *megaron*, which designated a pre-Greek type of rectangular house; or *temenos*, which the Greeks used in reference to sacred precincts).

Haarmann turns to good account achievements and conclusions of outstanding archaeologists of various countries (Gimbutas, Séfériadès, Anthony, Cavruc/Chiricescu, Ivanova, Chapman, Nikolov, Videjko, Lazarovici/Lazarovici, etc.), the works of those specialists being also the sources of the rich illustrative material of chapter 3 (maps, plans, photos,

reconstructions, etc.). Significant Old European aspects are discussed at various points of the same chapter: for instance, the "megasettlements" (p. 94) discovered at Petreni (Romania), at Tallyanky (Ukraine) and on several other sites; or the "totally mysterious" lack of graves (p. 110) in well-populated areas such as those of the Cucuteni culture (Romania) and the Trypillya culture (Ukraine).

Craftsmanship and art are dealt with in chapter 4. Haarmann starts by discussing proofs of higher and higher specialization as well as of gender-oriented division of work. There follow special paragraphs on weaving, clothing, pottery, metalwork (in copper and gold), all these being also fields in which substratal terms survived in Greek: *karpasos* 'fine flax', *chlaina* 'coat' (what about Romanian *haină* 'coat'?), *keramos* 'clay (for pottery)', *kaminos* 'kiln', *kelebe* 'pitcher', *metallon* 'metal', *chalkos* 'copper', etc. With well chosen illustrations (including the one-page photos of the famous statuettes from Hamangia, "Sitting Woman" and "The Thinker" – pages 140 and 141, respectively), Haarmann presents the most significant "cultural symbols" and ornamental motifs (triangle, meander, zigzag, spiral, etc.) of Old European sites. In one special case (the seals known as *pintaderas*), he observes transfer from Anatolia to Thessaly, by "early immigrants" (p. 129).

As for continuity, Haarmann takes into consideration not only mere perpetuation of ornamental motifs into early historical times, but also the more general "sense of abstraction" that remained manifest in the signs of the earliest script, in the artistic motifs of the "geometric" style of archaic Greece, as well in Greek geometry proper (p. 146). The final conclusion of the chapter is that the impulses of the Neolithic Danube civilization meant much for further developments in Southeast Europe as well as in the Aegean area up until classical Greek antiquity.

Chapter 5 presents "the model of an egalitarian society," the author's arguments sustaining the idea that the Danube civilization (like the later one of the Indus) demonstrates the possibility of civilization in the absence of any "state authority" (p. 147). In one special subchapter, Haarmann criticizes the ones who have misinterpreted Gimbutas's ideas about the Old European "matrifocal" spirit as "matriarchy." In fact Gimbutas expressly opposed such an idea (see quotations on p. 151); she viewed the basic units of the Old European social structure as "matriclans" with collectivist principles, and with "matrons" as central figures of such units. The members of matriclans most probably lived in "condominiums" such as the one reconstructed at Parța (p. 153).

The basic aspects of the pre-state model of society – defined as an "oecumene model of civilization" – are discussed in a special subchapter, outstanding about those aspects being "sib-oriented associations" and "permanent social contact and exchange of goods" (mainly by river navigation). Comparisons are propounded not only with the already mentioned Indus Valley, but also with other archaeologically well-known cultures such as Ubaid and Halaf (p. 155). In regard to the appearance of social hierarchy, Haarmann considers that it was first during the fourth millennium BC that men's control over production and exchange of goods began to be visible, under obvious influence of proto-Indo-European intruders. The earliest significant manifestations of the nomads from the North Pontic area in Southeast Europe are the ones on the Black-Sea coast of Bulgaria (Durankulak, Varna). Gradually, the new model of a stratified social structure (which eventually led to the replacement of the Old European oecumene by socially stratified polities) spread to other territories of Europe.

A longer chapter (6) is dedicated to religion and mythology, with a special focus on what the Greeks (as well as modern specialists) regarded as vestiges from the autochthonous pre-Greek population (*Pelasgoi*). Remarkable among those vestigial elements is what the Greeks remembered about the "sacred wedding" (*hieros gamos*) of the primeval goddess Eurynome and Boreas (the North Wind, in the shape of a snake – p. 160); the result of that union was the cosmic egg out of which "all things" came out. It appears that Eurynome and other pre-Indo-European goddesses were removed from their dominant positions by Indo-European gods of the Zeus type (p. 160). However, Haarmann (like Gimbutas, Marazov, Poruciuc, Ustinova and others) points out remarkable survivals of Great-Goddess figures in traditions of historical peoples (Greeks, Scythians, Thracians) as well as in folklore recorded in recent times. Special paragraphs in chapter 6 refer to signs of perpetuation even of pre-Neolithic religious beliefs, as reflected, for instance, in the incredible spreading of Venus-statuettes, certainly related to a fertility cult (p. 161). Similar Palaeolithic-Neolithic continuity is manifest in the divine figure that can be presented as "Mistress of Wild Animals" (surviving as Kybele in antiquity – p. 166).

Haarmann makes some necessary corrections of certain ("Indo-Europeanizing") interpretations, such as the one regarding bull symbolism: the latter should not suggest the existence of a "bull-god" proper, but rather of a supernatural bull that functioned as an "attribute" of a goddess (as still visible in the case of Mesopotamian Inanna – p. 167). As in other chapters, prehistoric roots are indicated by the author not only in material items, but also in substratal (basically pre-Greek) words, such as *bretas* 'wood-carved representation of a divinity', *dithurambos* 'an epithet of Dionysos', *thiasos* 'ritual procession', *thriambos* 'religious ceremony with singing and dancing', etc. A whole subchapter presents "cults and rituals," by taking into consideration, in turn, fertility rites, the water-and-rain cult, processions, probable mythology (that could be deduced from archaeological finds), ritual use of masks, etc. Haarmann closes the chapter by keen comments on certain clues about the use of music and dance in rituals of most probable Old European origin. Outstanding among his examples are representations of ritual round dances for which

Romanian archaeologists generally used the name of a traditional Romanian dance, *hora* (for instance, Haarmann's fig. 65 – after Gimbutas 1989: 312 – renders the pre-Cucutenian piece of pottery known as "Hora de la Frumuşica").

A shorter chapter (7) deals with Old European "visual symbol-systems" that reflect preoccupation with counting, measuring and registering. One of the author's ideas is that the Greeks became famous as "clever mathematicians" and as master-builders not only due to Oriental influences, but also to Old European heritage. Such a conclusion can be drawn from quite numerous combinations of points and strokes that occur (besides signs the may be designated as script proper) on Old European pots and statuettes. In following suggestions from authors such as Winn, Videjko, Ursulescu/Tencariu and others, Haarmann assumes that Old Europeans did not merely use numerical signs, but they also had their own notions of "magic numbers" (p. 183). Moreover, many finds (such as the ones from Karanovo and Parţa) indicate that the early farmers of Old Europe already had their own "calendar notations" (p. 184). Finally, Haarmann observes more pragmatic aspects, such as the possible manifestations of measures and weights, or of potter's and owner's marks (p. 188). As for possible perpetuation of Old European vocabulary in the fields covered by chapter 7, Haarmann gives yet another series of substratal words preserved in Greek, such as *lukabas* 'yearly cycle', *chronos* 'year, lifetime', *truge* 'harvest-time', *kupros* 'measure of grain', *kophinos* 'liquid measure' (what about Romanian *cofă* 'wooden pail, bowl, liquid measure'?).

Certainly worthy of all attention is chapter 8, in which Haarmann proves (again) that he is among the quite few specialists (notably Winn and Gimbutas) that appear to be in possession of solid arguments in favor of the idea that the earliest kind of script appeared not in Egypt and/or Mesopotamia, but (two millennia earlier) in Old Europe. One of Haarmann's basic statements is the following: "The Danube script belongs to the category of primary scripts (*Primärschriften*), that is, to the original, non-derived script systems" (p. 194). Another important aspect pointed out by the same author is that in Southeast-Central European regions there was significant transfer of Palaeolithic-Mesolithic symbols and motifs into early Neolithic culture, as visible over the whole territory covered by the "Vinča horizon" (p. 195), which had its own prolongations into Transylvania (Turdaş, Tărtăria) and further to the north-east (Cucuteni, Trypillya). The final result was a series of regional variants of the script system that more and more specialists now designate either as "Old European" (OE) or as "Danube Script" (DS).

Haarmann insists on the fact that only a limited number of DS signs may be regarded as pictograms (stylized representations of animals, plants, implements, etc.), whereas the majority is represented by signs with a "high degree of abstractness" (p. 204), of the kind we may view as V, X, or M (with or without "diacritical" additions, which certainly had their own significance). By taking into consideration the frequent occurrence of one-sign inscriptions (a use similar to the one visible in the case of the Indus script), the author concludes that DS signs were basically logograms (that is 1 sign = 1 word), and certainly not phonograms (that is, alphabetic signs).

Another assumption that Haarmann makes (in this volume, as in previous ones) is that the basic motivation that sustained the appearance and use of the Danube script was religious. Such a motivation is visible in the application of DS signs on miniature altars and cult vessels, as well as on spindle-whorls. A special sub-subchapter is dedicated to the "celebrated tablets of Tărtăria" (pages 218–221), whose discovery, interpretations and preservation have their own (rather complicated) story. Haarmann suggests that, at present, we may safely assume that the very context in which the Tărtăria tablets were found indicates religious (possibly shamanistic) use.

The last chapter (9) is about "the decay and the legacy" of the Danube civilization, that is, about what happened in Old Europe and around it after ca. 4500 B.C. As already visible in some of the comments above, Haarmann is among the ones that reject the idea of internal development (or, rather, involution) as main cause of the radical changes that led to the end of Old Europe proper. He considers that, for all voices that rejected Gimbutas's "Kurgan model" during the 80s and the 90s, more and more facts and finds (published by more recent specialists, such as Mallory/Adams, Slavchev, Todorova, Dergačëv, etc.) point to the major role played by North-Pontic pastoralists in all those changes. Traces of the initially peaceful penetration of those pastoralists have been found on several sites along the western Black-Sea coast (from Usatovo to Cernavodă and Durankulak), but certainly the most spectacular of those traces are the ones of Varna. The finds of Varna are impressive not simply by the large quantity of gold (practically "the oldest gold hoard in the world" – p. 226), but especially by the new symbolic objects unearthed on that site, notably the scepter and the diadem found in grave 36. Such objects are emblems of "chiefdom" and they mark a new kind of society, dominated by (partially naturalized) foreign elite.

Haarmann does not neglect the possibility of intensified east-west migration due to the climatic changes specific to the "Atlantic period" (4100–3800 BC). The penetration of more and more pastoralists into Old Europe eventually produced restriction of agriculture in favor of stockbreeding (p. 233). Also, unlike the earlier period of (supposedly) peaceful relations, after 4000 BC there was destruction of Old European settlements as well as more and more signs of "cultural drift" in the Balkans and in the Aegean world. For the latter phenomenon (first pointed out by Gimbutas), Haarmann does not imagine mass migration from Old Europe to the south, but rather migration of "smaller but influential groups," which carried with them their superior knowledge in fields such as craftsmanship (weaving, pottery, metallurgy),

architecture, communication, script, ritual-religious practices and symbols. Haarmann dedicates special paragraphs to mythical figures of Old European extraction, such as "the Great Goddess and her daughter" (p. 238) and to persistent symbols, such as the one of the "double-ax" (which appears to have been, originally, a stylized representation of a butterfly, as "symbol of regeneration" – p. 242). The final part of the chapter shows, again, Haarmann as an expert in all aspects and implications of the Old European script and of the subsequent pre-alphabetic systems that grew out of it all over the Mediterranean world, from Crete and Cyprus to the Iberian Peninsula and to North Africa (p. 255).

In the epilogue of the volume Haarmann first deals with the "notion of continuity" under circumstances of assimilation. He credibly compares the reconstructed model of Indo-Europeanization to well-known models of historical behavior, such as the ones visible in the case of the French and Spanish assimilatory pressure on the Basques, or the Russian pressure on Finno-Ugrian and Turkic minorities. In all such cases vestigial elements may survive long after the assimilation appears to have been completed. In regard to prestige vestiges, Haarmann observes that – especially after 1989 – there also were rather unpleasant manifestations of *Dilettantismus,* represented mainly by activists that tried hard to turn substratal elements into supreme features of imaginary identities. Haarmann's list of examples includes: Serbian nationalists' attempts at deriving the Cyrillic alphabet directly from the Vinča script; certain Bulgarian (and, I should add, Romanian) "theories" regarding the expansion of the Thracian "ancestors" to areas as remote as Egypt; the "idea" of certain Macedonian activists' about their own descent from Alexander the Great (p. 258).

Such distortions, however, should not prevent serious specialists from detecting and discussing elements that can prove to be of Old European extraction, although some of those elements resurfaced as late as modern times (for instance, in recently recorded folklore). Haarmann gives a whole list of items that deserve scientific attention, such as: substratal vocabulary of probable Old European origin; orally perpetuated stories and songs (such as the ones that refer to a primeval sea flood); ritual dances such as the *hora* of the Romanians and the *kolo* of the Slavs; the wattle-and-daub technique of house building; traditional costumes and hairstyles; ritual cakes; Virgin Mary's cult; secondary burial; etc. The last paragraphs of the book show that Haarmann does not confine himself to peasant culture; he considers that what some specialists presented as affinity between "tribal" art and modernism should not refer only to influences from Africa or Polynesia, but also to the "aesthetics of natural forms" that represented the very spirit of the Danube civilization (p. 261). Along that line of thought, Haarmann considers that the spirit under discussion is manifest in the works of famous modern artists such as Brancusi, Moore and Giacometti.

Haarmann's eminently interdisciplinary book is both inciting and inspiring; and, in writing it, the German-Finnish scholar showed both courage and competence. The present reviewer considers that whoever may, in the near future, set out to explore domains such as the history of script, European substrata, or the Indo-Europeanization of Europe, should not fail to take Haarmann into serious consideration.

ADRIAN PORUCIUC